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ABSTRACT

Pakistan, like the rest of the world, is confronted with ur zation, industrialization, the information explosion and all the complexities that characterize the atomic age; however, the majority of Pakistanis have yet to acquire basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills which are essential to meet the simplest demands of modern living. An analysis of the slow progress made in literacy eradication in Pakistan clearly points at poor monitoring and lack of motivation on the part of administrators, teachers, and students. As for public motivation this has to be created and not taken for granted. Governmental support and funding alone will not suffice to bring about an appreciable rise in the literacy rate in Pakistan. Literacy efforts have to have a social rather than a bureaucratic base. Pakistan has four provinces, each having its own provincial language. Literacy curricula will have to accommodate provincial needs to encourage literacy in the provinces. (RS)

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A LITERACY PROFILE OF PAKISTAN

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The General Situation

An analysis of literacy in Pakistan from 1951-87 indicates a very low literacy rate along with low enrollment patterns in primary and especially secondary education. This characteristic co-relates with an extremely limited availability of skilled personnel of all kinds and as a result the country suffers from a diminished capacity to organize and manage developmental tasks.

In the past, development tasks were few and fairly simple requiring mainly physical labour and unquestioning compliance from the people. However governments of today expect their people to show initiative and to participate actively in the development of their country. They want their people to acquire progressive attitudes to farming, health care, saving, spending, industry and education — in short all aspects of modern-day living. It is a well recognised fact that if governments are to succeed in their development efforts they must ensure that their people are literate and are able to understand development programmes and participate in them intelligently.

Pakistan therefore today faces the gigantic challenge of eradicating illiteracy in the country in order to function effectively in the age of technology.

The official figures for literacy indicate that during the period 1951-81 the literacy rate has increased from 16.4% to 26.2%. Thus only a 11% increase has been achieved during a span of three decades. There are sharp differences in rural and urban literacy rates. The ratio swings from 55.3% for urban males to a distressingly low 7.3% for rural females showing a seven-and-a-half-fold difference. There are also differences among the four provinces, namely Sind, Punjab, N.W.F.P., and Baluchistan. Sind has the highest literacy ratio (31.5%) followed by the Punjab (27.4%), the N.W.F.P. (16.7%) and Baluchistan (10.3%). Islamabad, the Federal capital of the country, is the only administrative area where the majority of the population is literate.

Out of 13 million people with some level of education, 46% have passed primary education, 23% middle and 20% matriculation. After matriculation the percentage falls to 5.9% for intermediate, 3.8% for B.A./B.Sc., i.e., the degree courses and only 1% for M.A./M.Sc., post-graduate degree courses. The percentage of engineering and medical graduates is 0.28 and 0.25 respectively and 0.28 for the law graduates.

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Female and Child Illiteracy

The Literacy and Mass Education Commission has defined the literate as being those persons who can read and write a simple statement (e.g., a letter) in any regional language of Pakistan. The literate should also be able to count and write numbers and do simple calculations. It is evident that a simple criterion has been established by the Commission for Mass Education to confirm literacy in a person. Despite this, three out of four persons in Pakistan are illiterate.

Females constitute the largest group of illiterates in Pakistan, and according to the 1981 Census, literacy rate amongst females in the country was only 16% and that of rural females as low as 7.3%. There are areas in Pakistan where female literacy is nominal. In rural Baluchistan for instance it is 1.8%. Prevalent attitudes and lack of awareness amongst both males and females aggravate female literacy.

Findings of workshops on female literacy indicate that women generally carry a low self-image in a patriarchal society like Pakistan, and therefore have low aspirations. The media also does not enhance their self-concept and needs to change its projection of the role of women in society. Sociocultural constraints have to be systematically removed in order to create a climate for female literacy.

Fig. 1: Literacy Rate by Sex and Rural/Urban Area in Pakistan in 1981 (in %)

Area/Sex	Total	Urban	Rural
TOTAL (PAKISTAN)	23.3	43.4	14.8
Males	31.8	51.5	23.4
Females	13.7	33.7	5.5
PUNJAB			
Total	24.5	43.1	17.3
Males	33.5	51.5	26.4
Females	14.4	33.2	7.4
N.W.F.P.			
Total	14.3	32.1	10.9
Males	22.7	42.8	18.8
Females	4.9	18.8	2.5
SIND			
Total	28.2	46.8	12.7
Males	36.0	53.9	20.8
Females	19.1	38.3	3.4
BALUCHISTAN			
Total	8.2	27.9	4.4
Males	12.5	37.7	7.3
Females	2.9	14.3	0.8

Source: Population Census of Pakistan 1981 Bulletin.

Primary education has been one of the major factors influencing literacy. According to one survey in Pakistan, a little more than 50% of the children of school-going age are enrolled in primary schools. About 50% of these will drop out before acquiring any worthwhile literacy skills. The percentage of enrollment is lower and the drop-out ratio is higher in rural areas, particularly in the case of females. Therefore a great number of children who do not get access to basic education or drop-out before acquiring literacy join the 45 million adult illiterates in the country every year, which adversely affects the literacy figures for Pakistan.

Unfortunately also, because of a high birth rate the number of illiterates is growing. Two to three million children are born every year in Pakistan. Unless some provision is made to absorb them into the formal school system, they will continue to join the ranks of the illiterates in the country.

A Review of On-Going Literacy Programmes

A survey of literacy programmes in Pakistan reveals that there are several on-going literacy programmes, in the four provinces of Pakistan. In Baluchistan however, the scattered population has hindered the spread of literacy. The average distance between villages is about 50 miles. Out of 5,800 villages only 2,600 have primary schools. It is impossible to find female teachers because literacy is low amongst women. However, literacy could be encouraged by the use of mobile schools. A village centre for training village women, where they could learn literacy along with a vocational skill, has been recommended by the Mass Education Commission.

In the North West Frontier Province there are 150 adult education centres. Enrollment is very low. Adults are not interested in literacy per se. They are more interested in skill training for which there is a growing demand. In the rural areas of N.W.F.P. women are not expected to go out of their homes for schooling. Therefore female literacy centres should be initiated in homes and other acceptable places. The literacy programme could be linked with vocational training to encourage female participation.

The Local Government Ordinance in the province of the Punjab entrusts adult education to the Local Bodies. Centres of adult education are established on the recommendation of the Union Councils who also decide their locations. Community involvement is encouraged by the formation of committees at the village level to plan, supervise and manage adult education programmes.

Teachers are trained at the union council level and the secretary of the committee is trained at the Local Government Training Institute at Lala Musa. Mobile teachers are used where educated persons are not available at the local level.

The local teachers and the members of the organization committee identify the adults in the community who will enroll in the literacy programmes. Time and place for teaching is decided after consultation with teachers. The curriculum and materials are produced by the Curriculum Centre Punjab. Each centre is provided with maps, charts, posters and follow-up materials. Most centres receive financial support from the Women's Division (a wing of the central government which was created to advance the cause of women in Pakistan), and special model centres for female literacy have been established.

The Adult Basic Education Society of Gujranwala was established in 1948. A.B.E.S. is a private non-profit organization supported through private donations, community support, foreign aid-giving agencies and sale of books the society produces. To initiate a programme, the local leaders are first motivated. Generally, local councillors support programmes of the society. The programme has a low drop-out rate (about 19%). The centres are closely supervised. Teachers are chosen from within the community, so that absenteeism is minimized. The criteria for hiring teachers is flexible. Honorarium is paid promptly. Each centre is provided with a television set and the teacher-student ratio is reasonable. The duration of the programme is for a period of six months after which the programme is formally closed, and a box of library books is placed at the learning centre for the newly literate.

The literacy programme of the Family Planning Association of Pakistan is somewhat akin to that of A.B.E.S. The F.P.A.P. initiates a simple and inexpensive welfare programme which the community can run independently. Success depends upon community involvement. The field workers of F.P.A.P. study the community before designing and launching a programme. The programmes are initiated through local leadership by involving community leaders. Linkages are established between development (including basic education) and family planning.

The Allama Iqbal Open University at Islamabad has been experimenting with a series of pilot projects on literacy. The University has developed projects for the production of literacy materials along with the training of personnel. The programme design, curriculum and materials are prepared in accordance with local requirements. The duration of the literacy programme is six months and it is funded by AIOU and UNICEF. Primary school teachers are used as resource persons. This programme focuses on social education, productive skills and literacy.

An Experimental Pilot Project, Integrating Education with Rural Development, has been initiated and includes in its target population primary-school-age drop-outs. This project aims at providing low cost, functional education which would lead to an improvement in the life style of the poor people in rural areas. Educational programmes are designed after assessing the needs of the target population and the resources of the community in question. Low-cost primary education (which includes mosque

schools for boys and neighbourhood schools for girls) is being provided. Skill training centres for women have been initiated and these teach farming, health, nutrition, mother and child care and other productive skills. Village workshop schools for skill training have been set up for youth who are not in school. About 30 villages have been covered by this programme. This project has not been evaluated so far.

The Adult Functional Literacy Project of Pakistan Television Corporation presents lessons related to literacy, numeracy, social relationships, health, nutrition, agricultural economics and management. According to the evaluation of the 6th Cycle (which ended May 1981) some 20,000 students, both men and women, derived literacy and other basic practical skills from this programme. Some 142,000 to 172,000 adults benefitted from this programme through private viewing arrangements.

A 10-15 minute programme on literacy, entitled 'Alif Ujala' is being broadcast daily from all stations of Radio Pakistan. This broadcast aims at motivating people to acquire literacy.

LAMEC, or the Literacy and Mass Education Committee, was established by the Government of Pakistan primarily to improve the low literacy rate in the country. The government felt the need to supplement formal education with a non-formal approach. A National Literacy Programme was started by LAMEC in 1985. A three-year model project, it continued to work till 1986 and was implemented in nine districts in the country. The first year's target was roughly half a million people. Instead the Commission was able to impart literacy to only 18,000 people. The Commission had calculated spending Rs. 140 on making a person literate. Instead they ended up actually spending over Rs. 3,000 per person, so the plan seemed to have met with very little success. The government decided to call off the programme. All the schools were closed formally on September 30, 1986.

Why did the programme fail? One of the reasons ascertained by LAMEC is that teachers were paid a meagre honorarium of Rs. 250 per month. This was not enough for them to devote full time to their jobs and motivate uneducated people to come and study. There was no effective way of monitoring these schools or teachers. The schools were in different villages, sometimes spread over a distance of 10 miles – working at different timings according to the needs of the residents. It became impossible for a supervisor working at a salary of Rs. 500 to go and check all the schools running under his supervision. Some of these schools did not actually exist in reality. The whole scheme eventually became only a paper exercise. This resulted in the failure of the National Literacy Scheme initiated by LAMEC in 1985.

Meanwhile the Prime Minister of Pakistan annouced his Five-Point Programme, which aimed at doubling the literacy rate in the country in the next four years. This meant not only more work in the formal primary education section but also increased efforts in the adult education section. (The Ministry of Education decided that about 150 million illiterate persons had to be educated through adult education programmes). A Pilot Project 'Iqra' was devised to be run in Rawalpindi and Islamabad districts. It would use a new plan – and approach not yet tested anywhere in the world. Along side this, another scheme was to be launched, to attract those students who had left primary education midway due to social of financial problems. This was named the 'Nai Roshni Scheme'. According to this scheme, 22,000 new centres were to be opened. These centres would run afternoon classes in the existing schools. The teachers would be regular Primary teachers. For every 10 centres there would be a supervisor. At the Tehsil level there be a Tehsil literacy inspector. There would be a district project manager at the district level and a divisional literacy manager at each division. A resident director would continue to function at the provincial level.

The aim of the 'Nai Roshni Scheme' is to enroll a maximum of 25 students at each centre with separate classes for boys and girls. This is basically a rural-oriented scheme. These centres were to start functioning in February this year. The reason for the delay is the non-availability of fully trained teachers in the required numbers -- trained to teach the new 'microscope syllabus'. This four-year project hopes to enroll 1.6 million students.

The budget for this project for four years is Rs. 3,100 million. There will be no foreign aid. Monetary incentives are being planned to motivate teachers. It has been proposed that a teacher be awarded a cash bonus for every student he makes literate.

In order to encourage literacy an Ordinance was passed in 1985, and according to it no illiterate will be issued a passport, nor will any illiterate get employment with any federal institution or agency.

Conclusion

An analysis of the slow progress made in literacy eradication clearly points at poor monitoring and lack of motivation on the part of the administrators, teachers and students. If the plan had been closely monitored at all stages of implementation, it would have been possible to identify weaknesses and correct them promptly. As for public motivation this has to be created and not taken for granted. Public motivation cannot be greater than the importance the sponsors themselves attach to the project in terms of commitment. However, governmental support and funding alone will not suffice to bring about an appreciable rise in the literacy rate in Pakistan. Literacy efforts have to have a social rather than a bureaucratic base.

The purpose of our literacy programmes should be to impart literacy skills within the development context.

Neoliterates should not only be able to read, write and acquire basic arithmetic skills but they should be able to cognize and participate at a basic level in the national development effort as responsible citizens. Literacy education will have to reach the population in the village – we need to go to them – study their problems – induce them to get educated. The change agents, motivators and catalysts appointed to do the job need incentives in order to work with commitment.

Future planning for literacy enhancement will have to consider creative alternatives to the rather traditional practices in vogue. Appropriate teaching materials including suitable primers need to be developed. Existing primers should be development-oriented and according to the every day vocabulary of the illiterates. Learning should be made an interesting real process by depicting experiences that relate to the reader's life.

Deveopment of a core vocabulary of a maximum of 2,000 words should be encouraged. This vocabulary should be used for the primer, classroom instruction and in written follow-up materials. Tangible goals should be outlined for the completion of the course. Provision must be made to provide suitable low-cost reading materials for post-literacy reading.

Inter-sectoral linkages should be streamlined and strengthened for the effective implementation of literacy programmes. Research and evaluation of the effectiveness of a programme should be an on-going component of the strategy to eradicate illiteracy. Cost-effectiveness must also be reviewed often. In short co-ordination and inter-agency co-operation should begin at federal and reach grass-root levels, and should be an important component of literacy planning.

Pakistan has four provinces, each having its own provincial language. Each province needs to be planned for individually — to some extent — keeping in mind its unique problems and needs. Literacy curricula will have to accommodate provincial needs in order to encourage literacy in the provinces.

Pakistan, like the rest of the world, is today confronted with urbanization, industrialization, the information explosion and all the complexities that characterize the atomic age. However, the majority of Pakistanis have yet to acquire basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills which are essential to meet the simplest demands of modern living. There is an urgent need to come to grips with the problems that accrue from the complexities of modern life. Time is running out for us as a nation. We must commit ourselves now to the promotion of education and literacy in the next decade.

INDIA'S NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION

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India, one of the biggest countries and perhaps the biggest democracy in the world, has an area of 3,287,263 sq. kms. It is administratively and politically constituted of 24 states and 7 union territories. The projected total population in 1986 is 758 millions: the population of children of the age group 6-14 is 164 millions and the population of adults of the age group 16-35 is 267 millions.

Article 45 of the Indian Constitution prescribes universal education for all children up to the age of 14. This target should have been achieved by 1960, but it could not be achieved with the result that India in 1987 has more than 1,000 lakh illiterate persons in the age group 15-35. One should clearly differentiate between an 'illiterate' and an 'uneducated' person. India has a lot of traditional wisdom to fall back upon which she acquired through ages. However, with all the strength of the traditional wisdom acquired through oral mode it is an admitted fact that a large chunk of Indians are illiterate.

Therefore, realising the need of education through literacy, numeracy and technocracy the Government of India has formulated the National Policy of Education 1986 and has also developed a Programme of Action depicting the strategies, approaches, methods, programmes and activities which will be adopted in order to organise education to achieve the target. The previous National Policy of Education, entitled Report of the Kothari Commission, was drafted in 1968. The two main differences between the 1968 policy and 1986 policy are that the 1968 policy was only an academic document while the 1986 policy and the programme of action are both legal documents approved by the Indian Parliament. Secondly, regarding philosophy and content, it may be said that 1968 policy emphasised Education for Development, while 1986 policy emphasises 'Education for Equality' and 'Equality in Education'.

Education for equality implies the access to education for all without discrimination based on area, caste, creed, religion, colour, sex etc. Accordingly, the dictum 'Education for All' is the guiding principle for this. Secondly, 'Equality in Education' means the education to be given to people should be of the same quality. This shifts the emphasis on enrolment to retention and achievement of the learners. In order to operationalize these two principles, the Central Government has developed a programme entitled 'Operation Blackboard'. The Central Government is going to provide all the primary schools with the necessary building, physical facilities, equipment and teaching aids for the instructional programmes to be organised in the schools. The Central Government is going to provide all these facilities irrespective of the contribution of the states.

In order to achieve the target of educating 431 million persons, 164 million children in 6-14 age group and 267 million adults in 15-35 age group by 2,000 A.D. the country has launched the following three programmes:

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